



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

Lisa Madigan
ATTORNEY GENERAL

April 5, 2005

To the Editorial Board:

During the week of April 10 to 16, 2005, we will observe the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This year's theme – "Justice Isn't Served Until Crime Victims Are" – emphasized the importance of providing support and assistance to victims as a critical element of justice in America. Even after 25 years of working to increase awareness there is still much to be done

In Illinois, we have made great progress in serving crime victims. Under state law, victims of crime are guaranteed certain rights, including the right to be reasonably protected from the offender, receive notification about the court proceedings, have access to information about the imprisonment and parole of the offender, and the right to recover restitution from the offender.

To increase overall awareness of victims' rights, my office will work closely with local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors throughout the state during the year to distribute materials featuring the "Crime Victims' Bill of Rights." It is our hope that greater knowledge will be the first step in improving our ongoing work to uphold and protect these important rights.

My office administers a number of programs to help victims recover, including the Crime Victims' Compensation Program which provides up to \$27,000 in compensation for certain damages to victims of crime. However, the state law that sets the framework for the program needs improvement in order to better address the needs of victims of certain crimes, in particular, sex crimes and domestic violence. During this legislative session, I am working with Sen. Kwame Raoul (D-13th District) and Rep. Careen Gordon (D-75th District) to improve the program by addressing the special needs of these victims.

Under the current law, a domestic violence survivor can be reimbursed for certain relocation expenses. However, the law does not take into account the burdensome cost of a security deposit and first month's rent that are often required by a landlord. Senate Bill 416 would allow victims of domestic violence greater ability to flee their abuser or move out of a shelter by providing compensation for the security deposit and the first month's rent of a new, safe residence.

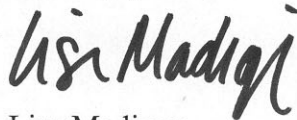
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Sexual assault victims experience a uniquely terrible trauma that often makes them reluctant to immediately go to a hospital or report the assault to law enforcement. Because the program requires victims to notify law enforcement within a certain time period, rape victims often have difficulty qualifying for reimbursement of expenses resulting from the assault. The Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault proposed House Bill 2389, which I support, to remove some of the barriers that rape victims face in qualifying for the Crime Victims' Compensation Program.

The Attorney General's Office is committed to serving justice by serving victims of crime. Violence has a negative effect on not just victims and their families, but our entire community. It is important that we work together as a community to help restore victims' sense of safety, security and stability as they travel the difficult road to recovery. We should all use National Crime Victims' Rights Week as a time to evaluate and increase the support we provide to victims of crime and their families.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lisa Madigan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "L" and "M".

Lisa Madigan
Attorney General